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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

3 May 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet and Chicom Military Actions

I. GENERAL

1. What military actions could the Soviets or the Chicom take against us in the Vietnamese war? In Vietnam, one might expect actions against those elements of US military power with which the North Vietnamese/Vietcong are less prepared or unable to cope and which are causing them the most trouble. Actions elsewhere would be in the nature of diversions intended to increase the manpower and material needs of US forces.

2. At the present level of combat, the Communists in North Vietnam are particularly concerned to find ways to counter our carrier based aircraft, land based aircraft, naval bombardment, and our inshore anti-shipping patrols and mining.

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3. In South Vietnam and Laos, the Communists are hurt most by our ground mobility and fire power, airborne mobility and fire power, and our practically unrestricted use of sea and air routes for logistic purposes.

4. For the future, the Communists may be apprehensive that the US will widen the list of targets taken under attack in North Vietnam, take steps (mining or blockade) to cut off access to North Vietnam by ocean and coastal shipping, substantially increase its forces in South Vietnam, or invade North Vietnam.

II. THE SOVIET UNION

5. The USSR is separated from Southeast Asia by great distances and the land, sea, and air routes thence are not subject to its control. Its military actions would, therefore, be restricted to provision of specialized manpower and materiel for specific tasks. Whether or not the Soviets would undertake a specific action would depend upon their estimate of the risks of becoming involved directly in war with the US. It is unlikely that the Soviets would go to war with the US over Vietnam.

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6. Soviet actions involving lesser degrees of risk could

be:

- a. To provide and man SAM units and interceptors.**
- b. To provide and man coastal defense guns and cruise missiles.**
- c. To provide and man patrol craft and guided missile patrol craft for inshore use.**
- d. To provide naval mines and technicians with sweeping gear for use in coastal waters.**
- e. To provide and man FROGS, cruise missiles, or MRBMs, with HE warheads, for harassment of airfields, bases and other installations in South Vietnam and Thailand.**
- f. To get the North Koreans to heighten tensions along the Korean Demilitarized Zone in order to prevent further transfer of forces from South Korea.**

7. Soviet actions involving greater degrees of risk

could be:

- a. To establish a naval task force in the South China Sea including mine laying, torpedo attack, and cruise missile submarines to harass our naval forces and increase our ship requirements.**

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- b. To mine covertly our fleet operating areas in Gulf of Tonkin or the sea approaches to South Vietnam using submarines.

III. COMMUNIST CHINA

8. In contrast to the Soviet Union, Communist China is adjacent to Southeast Asia and not far distant from such important US support areas as Okinawa, Taiwan, and the Philippines. China is capable of bringing significant ground and air forces to bear in Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Like the USSR, China's actions would be influenced by its estimate of the risks of war with the US. The current estimate is that China would intervene in Vietnam if North Vietnam were invaded or if the Communist regime there seemed about to collapse.

9. The Chinese have already taken military action against us in the Vietnamese war. Chinese AAA units in North Vietnam participate in the defense of the northern lines of communication. Chinese interceptors from Chinese bases have occasionally attacked our aircraft in the border areas. Chinese airfields have sheltered North Vietnamese aircraft.

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10. Other Chinese actions involving lesser degrees of risk could be:

- a. To provide additional AAA units.
- b. To extend the area in which approaching US aircraft are attacked, as allegedly posing a threat to China.
- c. To provide and man interceptors to operate from North Vietnamese airfields.
- d. To reinforce the South Sea Fleet and participate in defense of North Vietnamese inshore waters with motor torpedo boats and guided missile patrol craft.
- e. To conduct mining and mine sweeping operations in North Vietnamese coastal waters.
- f. To provide and man artillery units to support North Vietnamese Army operations in northern South Vietnam.
- g. To increase naval activity in Taiwan Strait and threaten the offshore islands by actual troop concentration or deception measures, in order to increase US ship and manpower requirements in the Far East.

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11. **Chicom actions involving a greater degree of risk could be:**

- a. To permit use of Chinese airfields for operations by the North Vietnamese Air Force.
- b. To defend North Vietnamese air space with the Chicom Air Force from Chinese bases.
- c. To operate the South Sea Fleet, with submarines, in such a way as to harass our naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin and increase our ship requirements.
- d. To conduct covert submarine mining operations in the Gulf of Tonkin and on the approaches to South Vietnamese ports.
- e. To create a threat to our naval forces by flying Chicom Naval Air Force jet light bombers into the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea.
- f. To extend ground operations in Laos into the Plains des Jarres, establish a base, and threaten Luang Prabang, Vientiane and US bases in northeast Thailand in order to place another military burden on the US.

12. If, for whatever reason, the Chicom decided to enter the war, they could take actions which would greatly increase US

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force requirements in Asia. Such actions could include:

- a. Movement into Southeast Asia on a broad front with substantial forces, over running Laos, and threatening Thailand and South Vietnam.
- b. An attack on Quemoy and other Chinat offshore islands.
- c. Utilization of jet light bombers with fighter support against our naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin and the Taiwan Strait.
- d. The use of guided missile patrol craft and submarines against our naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin and the Taiwan Straits.

13. The lists of actions are not exhaustive, but represent the sorts of things that should be thought about. Some of the capabilities have yet to be proved -- Chinese submarine operations, for example. But even the appearance of an intent to exercise a capability may be sufficient to create a diversion requiring the deployment of more men and materiel from the US.

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